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PREEMPTION AND RETRIBUTION: PRECISION-GUIDED MUNITIONS TO COUNTER TERRORIST THREATS

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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The development of the second generation of precision-guided munitions and stealth technology provides the United States National Command Authorities with a military option for prevention of and retribution for state-sponsored terrorist activities. This study examines the current U.S. policy on terrorism, the ways in which the U.S. has employed elements of national power against terrorist organizations, and determines whether the development of precision-guided munitions affords the U.S. leadership with effective means to conduct preemptive and retributive operations against these terrorist organizations.

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In the early morning hours of 15 April 1986, a combined force of U.S. Navy and Air Force strike fighters attacked several targets inside the sovereign territory of Libya.[1] These attacks were executed in response to a state-sponsored terrorist attack against United States servicemen in Berlin. The overall impact of this raid on Libya in retaliation for her support of state-sponsored terrorist activity has been difficult to ascertain. During the following year, Pan Am Flight 103 was destroyed over Lockerbie, Scotland, victim of a terrorist's bomb. The attack was traced to terrorists who are now being protected by the Libyan government. Despite this apparent continuation of Libyan-sponsored terrorism, the El Dorado Canyon Operation (Airstrikes against Libya in 1986) may have had the desired impact on Libya's support of terrorist activities: in fact, the overall number of terrorist attacks decreased from 19 in 1986 to 6 in 1987.[2] It should also be noted that in response to Libya's actions and the U.S.'s retaliatory raid, many U.S. allies joined political and economic sanctions against Libya.

In 1993, the United States again flexed its military muscle in response to terrorist activities when it employed cruise missiles to destroy the Iraqi Intelligence Headquarters after a failed terrorist attempt to assassinate former President George Bush during his visit to Kuwait.[3] Again, the impact of this retaliatory act has been left to speculation. While there have been no other attempts to assassinate U.S. government officials

by Iraqi sponsored terrorists, there have been other acts of terrorism directed against U.S. property and citizens.

Since 1993, there has been a continuous proliferation of terrorist activities against the United States and her allies. These acts of terrorism against Americans and U.S. assets have occurred, in most cases, outside the territorial confines of the United States. Historically, the United States has been the target of over 32% of all the terrorist attacks worldwide, second only to Israel.[4] Names such as the World Trade Center, Khobar Towers, and Luxor, have become synonymous with this trend of terrorist activities. As the world's remaining superpower, the United States must anticipate that her enemies will resort to asymmetric acts such as terrorism rather than engage her forces in conventional warfare. Despite the denunciation of terrorist acts by participants at the recent Arab Summit and Iranian requests to normalize relations with the United States, we know that many third world nations conduct/support terrorist training exercises. Additionally, with the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, control of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has become a grave issue. The possibility that these weapons may fall into the hands of terrorist organizations has emerged as a new formidable threat.

This study will look at the Clinton administration's position on state-sponsored terrorism, specifically the option of employing military elements in response to terrorist attacks. It

will then identify the administration's ways and means to carry out its policy. It will address possible alternative courses of action especially the development of precision guided munitions. The study concludes with recommendations for the United States to further its cause in the fight against state-sponsored terrorism.

Current U.S. Policy:

Since the early seventies, the U.S. government has taken an aggressive stance against state-sponsored (or any other form of) terrorism. While most U.S. counter-terrorism activities are directed at prevention, the use of its military assets as a counter-terrorism option has been essentially retributive. Following terrorist strikes, the U.S. takes all steps necessary to bring the perpetrators to justice. The current U.S. policy for dealing with international terrorism, set forth in the 1997 U.S. National Security Strategy, rests upon the following principles:

1.) No concessions will be made with terrorist organizations.
2.) The U.S. will bring all assets to bear against state sponsors of terrorism.
3.) The U.S. will use all available legal mechanisms to punish international terrorists.
4.) The United States will assist other governments

in their fight against terrorism.[5]

Ways and Means: In carrying out this policy of "non-tolerance" of terrorist activities against citizens of and property belonging to the United States, our leaders continue to exercise all four elements of national power. Despite budget reductions throughout the government infrastructure, recent proposals, including the 1997 National Security Strategy, call for expanded counter-terrorism initiatives.

Political and Economic: The United States has thus taken the lead in working with other countries in bringing both political and economic pressures against Iran and Libya (both identified as prime sponsors of terrorist activities.) At the 1996 Lyon Summit, attending representatives, through the urging of the U.S. government, joined together in condemning Iran's support of international terrorism.[6] In addition to these condemnations, the United States has limited trade with both of these countries and has convinced many of her allies to do the same. The United States has also taken active measures to increase intelligence training and has offered allies counter-terrorist training.

Military Efforts: As the world's only remaining superpower, the United States must expect that any religiously or politically oriented faction will engage only in asymmetric actions against her. The bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia in 1995 and the bombing of The Khobar Towers the following year are examples

of asymmetric warfare. If the source of the terrorist threat is known, the United States has the military wherewithal to conduct retaliatory offensive operations against sponsors of terrorism, such as the El Dorado Canyon Operation in 1986. However, when the perpetrator is a "rogue" organization with no evident state sponsors, military options are considerably (or totally) reduced. As a result of the two bombings in Saudi Arabia, then Secretary of Defense William Perry issued a revised Directive 2000.12 which emphasized force readiness:

- A significant increase in resources directed at anti-terrorist operations.
- An increased intelligence gathering effort.
- Increased training efforts with foreign counterparts.[7]

Information Operations: Most information operations seek to increase public awareness of the terrorist threat. After the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York and the Oklahoma City bombing, awareness of the terrorist threat was significantly raised within the United States. Contrary to freedom-loving traditions, U.S. citizens have joined their European counterparts in enduring baggage checks, metal detectors, and other annoyances associated with counter-terrorist and anti-terrorist activities.

Terrorism, The Law, and The National Defense: Since the United States ascended to superpower status after the conclusion of World War II, it has not made a direct preemptive military

strike against states supporting or sponsoring terrorism. In the case of Libya, the strikes against Tripoli responded to terrorist attacks against American military personnel. As is evident in our recent handling of the North Korean and Iranian nuclear reactor projects and Libya's chemical munitions facility, the United States would rather employ diplomatic and economic means to counter potential threats to our national interests. Nonetheless, U.S. precision strike capability, which has been exercised in retribution against countries sponsoring terrorist acts against the United States, combined with U.S. intelligence-collecting and internal security capabilities, serves as an effective deterrent against terrorist organizations contemplating action within the United States. With allied support and an improved external intelligence collection capability, the United States could use this military capability as a deterrent not only against terrorist attacks within the U.S. borders but also against attacks directed at U.S. interests and personnel abroad.

Legally, the United States must resolve the issue of territorial sovereignty when deciding to take action against state-sponsored terrorists within the borders of a foreign country. Article 51 of the United Nations Charter stipulates that "Nothing in the present charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the U.N."[8] In 1984, the U.S. Congress passed "The Crime Bill" which established U.S. authority to

prosecute hostage takings that occurred outside the United States.[9] On 9 December 1985, the U.N. General Assembly adopted Resolution 40/61 in which it unequivocally condemned as criminal "all acts, methods, and practices of terrorism wherever and by whomever committed."[9] With the legal authority, President Reagan ordered a U.S. strike against Libya in 1986. In another key element of international policy, NATO has declared (and incorporated into doctrine), that "after the first use of biological weapons, the response of a NATO member could be nuclear retaliation."[10] Should future state-sponsored terrorists employ WMD, they could then suffer a horrific retaliation.

Alternatives:

Although the United States is actively seeking to coordinate all counter- and anti-terrorist activities worldwide, countries such as Israel, France, and the Netherlands take different approaches in dealing with the terrorism issue.

The "Israeli Option:" The continued existence of a free Israel is dependent upon aggressive and successful anti-terrorist operations. With the assassination of Egyptian Intelligence Chief, Col. Mustafa Hafaz, by members of an Israeli "assassination team" in July 1956, Israel sent a clear message to the "terrorist world" that she would use any and all means necessary to fight the terrorist threat.[11] Since that day, Israel has executed the full gamut of counter-terrorist options

from the use of letter bombs to a precision airstrike against an Iraqi nuclear reactor. The price Israel pays for this very aggressive approach to counter-terrorist operations is negative world opinion - a small price to pay for survival.

The "French/Neutralist" Stance: When the United States developed the plans for Operation El Dorado Canyon, U.S. planners requested permission for over-flight of France and Spain to enable aircraft launched out of England to execute their missions over Libya. Both countries refused. Several other countries like France and Spain, have attempted to maintain a "neutral" stance when it comes to dealing with state-sponsored terrorism. Such a stance is more likely when the sponsor states hold an economic lever, such as oil, over the "neutralist" states. In recent developments regarding U.S. proposals for punitive actions against Iraq, France has taken an active role in advocating a reduction of sanctions against Iraq despite Iraq's defiance of UN-imposed restrictions and her known support of terrorist organizations.

Countering Terrorism in The Netherlands: The Netherlands has experienced fewer terrorist attacks than any surrounding European country. Experts in the United States and Germany believe terrorist organizations use the Netherlands as a type of "base camp" to conduct operations in other European countries,[12] so the Netherlands is relieved of the threat in return for the "host" role. However, the success of the Netherlands in stemming the

tide of terrorism may be based on the fact that she has developed an effective balance between effective security and democratic openness. The Netherlands' government has declared all terrorist activities as being against the law. So her police force deals with the threat, making terrorism a law-enforcement issue, not a military issue. Terrorist organizations also have problems gaining a foothold within The Netherlands because of her decentralized government and the ability of her resilient society to co-opt any terrorist cause.

The U.S. Military Option: Current U.S. policy for dealing with international terrorism states that "The United States will bring all assets to bear against state sponsors of terrorism."[13] In most cases, such as Syria and Iraq, the United States has brought both political and economic pressures against countries sponsoring terrorist activities. However, with the development and subsequent improvement of precision-guided munitions and weapons delivery platforms, the United States has a current ability to respond militarily to state-sponsored terrorist activities.

Background and Capabilities: In 1972, the U.S. Air Force succeeded in dropping several spans of the Paul Doumer Bridge in North Vietnam. What makes this event significant is the fact that the mission was conducted by a flight of F-4 aircraft using precision-guided munitions. Hundreds of air attacks using unguided munitions had previously failed.[14]

In the 26 years since that event, U.S. research and development has led to the development of the next generation of precision-guided munitions (PGMs). Concurrently, a new generation of highly accurate weapons delivery platforms such as the F-117, F-16, F-18, and F-15E has been developed to complement the state-of-the art PGMs. Since the first successful tactical employment of PGMs in Vietnam, several countries have employed PGMs, highly accurate weapons delivery platforms, or a combination of both in either carrying out preemptive or retaliatory strikes against state-sponsored terrorist organizations, or in open warfare such as Desert Storm. Consider the following examples:

Osterik Nuclear Facility, Iraq, 7 June 1981:

During the late 1970s, Israeli intelligence discovered that the French were assisting the Iraqi government in the construction of a nuclear power plant in Osterik, Iraq. Although the Iraqi and French governments stated that the sole purpose for the plant was for power generation, the Israeli government had reason to believe that the Iraqis would be able to obtain weapons grade materials from the same reactor. Knowing that Iraq was an enemy to Israel and a staunch supporter of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its terrorist organizations, Israel determined that it would not be in her best interest if Iraq was allowed to develop a nuclear capability. In response, Israel launched a strike mission involving a mix of F-16 and F-15

aircraft carrying MK-84 general purpose bombs (non-precision free fall bombs that are only as accurate as the platform delivering them) to destroy the facility.[15] The mission was successful: Key components of the reactor were destroyed and all aircraft returned safely. The degree of collateral damage has been left to speculation. However, Iraqi authorities claimed that close to 300 workers were killed during the attack.[16] (Although precision-guided munitions were not used, the mission succeeded because of the employment of the highly accurate F-16. Like the F-15E, the F-16 can deliver any type of free-fall munition with a high degree of accuracy.)

Tripoli, Libya, 15 April 1986: American warplanes attacked several military targets within Libya in response to Libyan-sponsored terrorist attacks against U.S. personnel stationed in Berlin. The United States employed a mixture of PGMs delivered from the FB-111s and "dumb bombs" delivered from A-6 aircraft.[17] Despite the loss of one aircraft, the mission was an overall success: All targets were struck with little collateral damage. (The most notable exception was the destruction of one of Qaddafi's homes resulting in the death of one of his daughters.) However, because of the sensitivity of high-tech weapons systems, some of the sorties were canceled due to weapon systems malfunctions which would have inhibited the bombers' ability to attack with precision.

Tunis, Tunisia, 1988: After the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the PLO moved its headquarters to Tunis, Tunisia in an effort to prevent the Israelis from attacking their headquarters. However, the Israelis succeeded in attacking their new headquarters using F-16 aircraft employing non-guided munitions. Again, the mission was successful: The PLO headquarters was destroyed and several high-level PLO officials were killed. Due to the precise accuracy of the F-16, the Israelis were able to achieve their objectives in one mission with little collateral damage and no aircraft lost.

Operation Desert Storm, Iraq, 1990-1991: Although not considered a military operation in response to a terrorist attack, Desert Storm provided an undeniable illustration of the exacting toll taken on the Iraqi military by the use of PGMs and highly accurate delivery platforms. During this conflict, the Coalition Air Force employed a variety of precision-guided munitions ranging from laser guided bombs delivered from such platforms as the F-117, F-16, and F-15E, to air and sea-launched cruise missiles.

Throughout the air campaign, the U.S. placed high priority upon minimizing civilian casualties and collateral damage. On 3 February 1991, after four days of bombing, the Iraqi representative to the United Nations, Mr. Tariq Aziz, stated that his country had sustained 41 civilians killed and 191 wounded as a result of coalition aerial attacks.[18] Analysts feel that this

number may have been intentionally falsified for propaganda purposes because two days later, the figure rose to 428 civilians dead and 650 wounded.[19] Various postwar reports place the number of civilian casualties during the 43-day air campaign at close to 5000 and the number of military casualties at close to 100,000.[20]

During the Gulf War, U.S. forces delivered either precision guided munitions or "dumb bombs" from precision platforms against Iraqi targets. The table below reflects the number of sorties flown and targets destroyed with this advanced technology:

Table 1: Gulf War Targeting Data

Target Type	Number of Targets	Sorties
Power Stations	28	215
Oil Facilities	28	518
C3 Facilities	170	601
NBC Facilities	31	902 [21]

To demonstrate the effectiveness of PGMs, we need only to compare the results of the Desert Storm air campaign with those of World War II. All of Iraq's refinery capability was destroyed using half the bombing tonnage dropped on a single German refinery during WWII.[22]

Baghdad, Iraq, 1993: In 1993, during a visit to Kuwait, former President George Bush was subject of an assassination plot by terrorists sponsored by Iraq. In response to this attempted assassination, the United States launched several cruise missiles against the Iraqi Intelligence Headquarters, which destroyed the facility. These highly accurate weapons demonstrated another type of weapon system the United States could use in its war against terrorism. Unlike manned aircraft which place the aircrew and aircraft at risk, a cruise missile can be launched outside enemy threat ranges. With Global Positioning System (GPS) guidance, they can strike designated targets with a high degree of accuracy. As with the attack on Libya in 1986, the impact of this retaliatory act is indeterminate at best. However; since the launch of these cruise missiles, the Iraqi government has not sponsored another terrorist attack against U.S. diplomats.

The operations described above, combined with other operations conducted between 1971 and 1997, sent a clear message to state-sponsored terrorists and their host nations: Using precision guided munitions, highly accurate weapons delivery platforms, and stealth technology, the United States has the capability to strike any target around the world employing minimal assets with a relatively high probability of success and a correspondingly minimal risk to U.S. personnel and military assets. But the United States is not resting upon her laurels.

The following table reflects some of the precision-guided munitions that the U.S. has added to her inventory since 1972, increasing both their lethality and accuracy:

Table 2: Precision Munitions

Munition Designation	Guidance	Capability
*Air launched Cruise Missile (CALCM)	INS/GPS	Stand-off/Point Target
* Have Nap (AGM-142)	Data link to Weapons controller	Point Target
* Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM)	GPS/INS	Stand-off
* Joint Standoff Weapons (JSOW)	GPS/INS	Gliding Dispen.
* AGM -130	Data link	25-40NM Range

These PGMs provide the following advantage:

1. All munitions have an estimated accuracy of less than 100 meters when all systems are working.
2. Each munition affords the user with a standoff capability and a high probability of successfully destroying the engaged target.
3. This standoff capability permits the user to employ the munitions without flying through a threat arena.

Joint Operations Against Terrorism: During the Gulf War, the United States increased the accuracy of her air delivered

munitions by placing special operations units behind enemy lines to locate and designate targets for airstrikes with precision munitions. Thus, following the decision to employ the military element of national power in response to terrorist activities, the most risky and demanding aspect of the military option would be location of targets. This may be facilitated by the insertion of a special operations team to locate and designate the terrorist target. This would require insertion of U.S. ground troops within a foreign country without a declaration of war.

Stealth Technology: During the Gulf War, the United States also revealed another capability that could further enhance her ability to conduct pre-emptive or retaliatory strikes against state-sponsored terrorists. That capability is stealth technology. As proven during the Gulf War, stealth technology allowed the F-117 to penetrate one of the most heavily defended cities in the world, Baghdad, and then to deliver munitions with deadly accuracy, escaping unscathed. Combined with precision munitions, stealth technology allows U.S. assets to penetrate countries harboring state-sponsored terrorists organizations, execute precision strikes, and then escape without detection. Used in a dramatic, publicized scenario, this capability could have a significant deterrent psychological effect on terrorist organizations and their sponsoring countries.

Problems with using the military option: The United States clearly has the technological capability to employ

precision guided munitions in a multitude of environments with a high probability of success. However, several problems attend employment of these munitions in response to an act of terrorism:

1.) Identifying the target: In most cases, the most difficult task associated with a retaliatory strike will be to identify the perpetrator and locate their "base camp." As noted previously, this could put highly skilled U.S. ground troops in harm's way.

2.) As world leader, the United States is concerned with maintaining the integrity and respectability of this role. Thus, the United States will seek to gain world approval prior to executing a preemptive or retaliatory attack. This takes time and removes the element of surprise, which could well deny effectiveness.

3.) As cited above, the Israelis have employed the "military option" in response to terrorist activities more than any other nation. Despite this, she remains subject to the highest number of terrorist attacks. Thus we cannot avoid the implication that violence begets violence, that military actions only serve to escalate the level of violence.

4.) Retaliation on the part of the terrorist organization is always a possibility should the strike forces of the United States not succeed in destroying the entire terrorist element. This may prove to be "fatal" in light of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is now believed that Libya, Iran, and Iraq (countries with a history of supporting terrorism), possess both chemical and biological weapons. In this scenario, the United States may be "held hostage" by terrorist organizations due to fear of a chemical or biological terrorist attack in response to our efforts to bring these organizations to justice.

The Media: A two-edged sword: Media exposure tends to be one of the main goals of terrorist organizations. Unknown terrorist organizations can bring their "causes" to world attention by exploitation of the international media. Countries with an effective anti/counter-terrorism program must use the media skillfully. While control of the media is taboo in a democratic society, democratic governments must work with the media to ensure that the truth is broadcast and that both sides of the story are told. Terrorists have become skilled at cultivating

the "underdog" image and portraying their adversaries as ruthless aggressors.

However, the media can be used as a source of intelligence on terrorist organizations. The media can indirectly provide counter-terrorist organizations with information concerning the terrorist organizations' motives, location, and membership through the stories they publish. Thus terrorist organizations jeopardize their most valuable asset - secrecy - when they "go public." To effectively exploit the media, a government must have a working relationship with the media based upon openness, honesty, and respect.

Force protection: In response to the bombings of the U.S. embassy in Saudi Arabia and The Khobar Towers, the Clinton Administration has directed our military leaders to place the highest priority on security of all deployed military assets. Deployed U.S. forces have always provided terrorist organizations with lucrative targets. Defense Department Directive 2000.12 directs all military commanders to take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety of their deployed troops and assets. These measures include awareness training, increased facility security, and intelligence gathering initiatives with host nations. A critical part of counter-terrorism is removal of the "easy" targets from the reach of terrorist organizations.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The United States has the military capability to strike terrorist organizations and their supporting states with relative impunity. Current legal guidance, both in U.S. courts and the international legal system, provides the United States with the authority to execute strikes in retaliation to terrorist acts. However, the U.S. has not shown an inclination for preemptive actions against such organizations. In the long run, especially given the proliferation of WMD, U.S. reluctance to conduct preemptive military acts may leave our society at severe risk. What should we do?

It is in the best interest of the United States and our allies for the U.S. to take the same course against terrorism as we did against the spread of communism: Establish counter-terrorist alliances, and deter terrorism with a capable military force. As a result of the overwhelming success of the U.S. forces against Libya in 1986 and against the Iraqi army in the Gulf War, the world is aware of U.S. military capabilities to strike any place at any time with uncanny precision and effectiveness.

Each time the United States executes a precision strike against the Iraqis in response to treaty violations, and each time Israel executes a preemptive or retaliatory strike against terrorist organizations using U.S. technology, the United States sends a strong message to those countries willing to "host" or

sponsor terrorist organizations that pose a threat to U.S. security: "We have the capability and we have displayed our willingness to use all elements of national power to punish those responsible."

In addition to continued development of this military capability, the U.S. should take the following actions to effectively counter the terrorist threat:

1.) Continue working with the international community to develop counter-terrorist organizations and intelligence-gathering networks. The overall success or failure of the United States to successfully deter terrorist attacks within the United States will rest upon her ability to detect these terrorist organizations prior to execution of their attacks,and/or locate them after an attack thus insuring a retaliatory strike. As such, the United States must be willing to invest resources towards an effective data collecting network of which a large portion will be HUMINT (Human Intelligence).

2.) Continue to educate the American public on the terrorist threat.

3.) Whenever possible, counter terrorism via "coalition" action: Maintain support of the

international community in all counter-terrorist activities, especially preemptive and retaliatory military actions.

4.) Continue economic and political sanctions against those nations that persist in supporting terrorist organizations.

5.) Maintain a credible resolve to employ the "military option" if all other options fail.

The United States must continue to display the willingness to bring all elements of national power to bear in dealing with the state-sponsored terrorists. When necessary, we must be willing to take this stand alone. **(4880)**

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